

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
U. S. AID MISSION TO LAOS

November 29, 1968

A MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR

All who attempt great things live constantly with danger. Our spiritual and political leaders are no safer from the risks that accompany achievement than are those who work at the business of social and economic advancement in the developing nations of the world. None of those on AID's far-flung lines live closer to the shadow of death than we who work in Laos. Hardly a week, hardly a day, passes that someone has not had a close brush with death, as a part of his job, and tragedy strikes with grim regularity.

Never before has tragedy struck so appallingly as on last Monday, the black Monday in which 26 lives were lost--20 of them working at the business of American assistance to Laos. They were doing their jobs, and they all knew their jobs were as dangerous as they were necessary, urgent, important, and rewarding.

Someone must try to speak for all of the USAID Mission, and because my sorrow, my feeling of loss, and my gratitude is as great as anyone's, I will do so.

Words are inadequate to express our sympathy for the loved ones of these gallant dead. To them we offer all the support and assistance at our command to see them through this trying period and the days ahead. We cannot lighten their burden of grief, but I think it will make it easier if they remember that these men died doing what they wanted to do, working for improvement in the lives of people, working to make the world a little better place than they found it.

To all those who helped, and are still helping--in rescue, in moving the remains, in locating relatives, in helping them with arrangements--I express the gratitude of everyone affected by this tragic event. We will communicate our appreciation individually as soon as time permits.

To the bereaved of those ladies who were traveling as our guests, we extend our heartfelt sympathy.

And to those fortunate two who survived, our prayers for quick and complete recovery. We share with your families a constant vigil and high hopes.

Let us all go back to our jobs with renewed determination, and let us make our work a memorial to the efforts of those we mourn.

A E Farwell

November 29, 1968

Special Bulletin

The crash of the Air America C-46 Monday, November 25, took 26 lives. The plane, under charter to USAID, was the regular Milkrun South, which had left Pakse about 1405 hours on its northbound flight and had picked up additional cargo and passengers at Savannakhet. It was turning and climbing after takeoff from Savannakhet when it suddenly had trouble and lost altitude. The plane struck a tree, tearing off a wing and fuel tanks, which caught fire and burned. The fuselage flipped over and hurtled into the ground, about two kilometers from the airstrip. The fuselage did not burn. This was about 1536 hours.

The exact cause of the accident is still under investigation.

There were two survivors, an American, Stephen Coley, and a Thai national employed by USAID Public Works, Veera Kaenlek. Both are hospitalized in Bangkok and at last reports were in serious condition but making some progress.

Air rescue and crash personnel from Vientiane and Thailand responded instantly and efficiently, as did many elements of the American Mission to Laos and RLG personnel. Valiant work went on all through the night to take out the remains from the crumpled fuselage, to identify them, to contact families, to move them to places where they could receive proper attention, and so on. Among the dead were Lao, American, Filipino, Thai, French, and Vietnamese national. Five of them were ladies who had been flown down from Xieng Khouang Province as guests of USAID to attend the cremation services of Tiao Son Noungen. Ten were employees of USAID, including two employed by the OICC under agreement with USAID. Five were employees of Air America. Three were Operation Brotherhood personnel. Two worked for the Mission Guard Service. One young man had simply hitched a ride, unauthorized.

The list of the dead follows:

Mme. Chao Saykham (Lao) - wife of Chao Saykham, Chao Khoueng of Xieng Khouang
Mme. Peandly Selbe (Lao, French) - sister of Chao Saykham
Mme. Siphay (Lao) - sister of Chao Saykham
Mlle. Koun (Lao) - niece of Chao Saykham
Mme. Soune (Lao) - wife of Col. Tanh
Donald J. Parenteau (American) - OICC (PAS Agreement with USAID)
Donald S. Kobayashi (American) - USAID Agriculture
Harold O. Sealock (American) - USAID Education

Alex Claravall (Filipino) - OICC (PAS Agreement with USAID)
Da Soukvilay (Lao) - USAID Controller's Office
Nguyen The Hung (Vietnamese) - USAID Property Management
Udom Khamsawasdi (Thai) - USAID Public Works
Vattana Aphinyartkul (Thai) - USAID Property Management
Narong Khoonmuang (Thai) - USAID Agriculture
Wang Nai Tang (Vietnamese) - USAID Education
Capt. E. B. Hodgkins (American) - Air America (Pilot)
J. C. Murray (American) - Air America (First Officer)
Baltazar Reyes (Filipino) - Air America
Les Porter (American) - Air America
Chaveng Yuphaphin (Thai) - Air America
Noel S. Extremadura (Filipino) - Operation Brotherhood
Brigido D. Garcia (Filipino) - Operation Brotherhood
Rodolfo Cawili Villaroman (Filipino) - Operation Brotherhood
Bounkouane (Lao) - Mission Guard Service
Bounkham (Lao) - Mission Guard Service
Nai Peu (Lao) - unlisted passenger, Wapikamthong Province

Messages of sympathy and offers of assistance have come from many persons and places--among them expressions of condolence from Administrator Gaud, Assistant Administrator Bullitt, the Mission in Bangkok, the Mission in Rawalpindi, and Director Mann of the USAID Mission in Kinshasa, who was formerly Director of USAID/Laos.



VATANA APHINYARTKUL



NGUYEN THE HUNG



HAROLD O. SEALOCK



DONALD KOBAYASHI



NAI TANG WANG



NARONG KHOONMOUANG



DA SOUKVILAY



DONALD PARENTEAU

**No photographs
available:**

**ALEX CLARAVALL
OUDOM KHAMSAWATDI**